

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

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INFO DEA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 25273

DEPT PLEASE PASS AMB WHITEHOUSE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNAR, TH

SUBJECT: HELICOPTERS FOR TNP

REF: (A) BANGKOK 21291; (B) JOINT HELICOPTER REPORT
DATED JULY 22, 1976; (C) IGA REPORT DATED JUNE 24, 1976;
(D) STATE 221618; (E) BANGKOK 25141

SUMMARY: EMBASSY CONTINUES TO BELIEVE THAT ALL FIVE
HELICOPTERS SHOULD BE DELIVERED TO THE THAI AND THAT
DELAY MAY HAVE HARMFUL EFFECTS ON THE ANTI-NARCOTICS
EFFORT IN THAILAND. END SUMMARY.

1. THE EMBASSY CONTINUES TO BELIEVE THAT ALL FIVE
HELICOPTERS SHOULD BE DELIVERED TO THE THAI IN ACCORD-
ANCE WITH THE PROAG WHICH WE SIGNED IN 1974. WE FEEL
THAT THE ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF DELIVERY CONTAINED IN
REFS A AND B PROVIDE ADEQUATE JUSTIFICATION FOR THIS
ACTION.

2. AS NOTED IN REF E, MISSION MUCH APPRECIATES
THE CONSTRUCTIVE AND POSITIVE REPLY THE DEPT. HAS
PROVIDED (REF D), REGARDING HELICOPTERS FOR THE
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TNPD.ON BALANCE, HOWEVER, WE CONSIDER THAT APPROACH-

ING THE THAI TO AMEND THE 1974 PROAG WILL NOT RPT NOT SERVE OUR OVERALL INTERESTS. WE ARE ALREADY FAR BEHIND IN CARRYING OUT THE COMMITMENT WE MADE IN THE 1974 PROAG. RAISING NEW ISSUES THAT IMPLY EXTENSIVE REORGANIZATION OF THE TNPD AND RENEGOTIATION OF THE PROAG WILL NOT RPT NOT GO DOWN WELL AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF OUR PERFORMANCE TO DATE.

3. MOREOVER, AT PRESENT THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS IS SEEKING TO ASSERT ITS PRIMACY IN THAI FOREIGN RELATIONS ACROSS THE BOARD, AS THE NEGOTIATIONS ON A RESIDUAL MILITARY AND INTELLIGENCE PRESENCE DEMONSTRATED; TO RENEGOTIATE THE 1974 PROAG MAY DRAW THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS INTO THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS. THIS WILL NOT RPT NOT NECESSARILY HAVE A BENEFICIAL EFFECT ON THE NARCOTICS PROGRAM. SPECIFIC COMMENTS KEYED TO PARAS OF REF D FOLLOW.

4. REF PARA 2A. THE 1974 PROAG ALREADY COVERS THIS QUESTION. IT STATES THAT HELICOPTERS WILL BE BASED IN TRAFFICKING AREAS AND THAT THE THAI NATIONAL POLICE WILL INFORM DEA OF THE LOCATIONS AND MOVEMENTS OF EACH HELICOPTER SUPPLIED FOR ANTI-NARCOTICS ACTIVITIES. WE ASSUME THAT REFERENCE TO CHIANG MAI IN PARA 2A IS TO THE BPP BASE AT MAE RIM. MAE RIM HAS HANGAR FACILITIES FOR ONLY TWO HELICOPTERS, AND CANNOT HANDLE FIVE.

5. EMBASSY AGREES THAT PLACING HELICOPTERS UNDER THE OPERATIONAL CONTROL OF THE BPP AND EVENTUALLY UNDER THE NEW POLICE NARCOTICS DIVISION NOW BEING FORMED MIGHT RESULT IN MORE EFFICIENT USE OF THE MACHINE. THE HELICOPTER EVALUATION TEAM, HOWEVER, FOUND NO RPT NO EVIDENCE THAT THAI POLICE AIR DIVISION (TPAD) OPERATIONAL CONTROL OVER THE HELICOPTERS HINDERED BPP OPERATIONS. IN ANY CASE, EMBASSY FEELS IT WOULD BE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO GET AGREEMENT ON THIS FROM THE TPAD. THE BPP SHOULD NOT RPT NOT HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO RELEASE THE AIRCRAFT TO CONFIDENTIAL

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OTHER AGENCIES EXCEPT BACK TO THE TPAD. THE TPAD IS THE ARM OF THE TNPD DESIGNATED TO HANDLE AIRCRAFT, AND WE BELIEVE THAT IT IS NOT PRACTICABLE TO PRESCRIBE A NEW ORGANIZATIONAL SETUP FOR THE THAI POLICE.

6. REF PARA 2B. EMBASSY IS CHECKING WITH BPP COMMANDER TO DETERMINE THE EXACT NUMBER OF NARCOTICS

TEAMS NOW IN EXISTENCE. THE EMBASSY DOES NOT FEEL THAT THE NARCOTICS PROGRAM WOULD BE SERVED BY DEMANDING THAT THE THAI FIELD ALL 55 BPP ANTI-NARCOTICS TEAMS PRIOR TO DELIVERY OF THE HELICOPTERS. RATHER, THE BPP SHOULD BE URGED TO FIELD THE TEAMS AS SOON AS IS PRACTICABLE. IN ANY CASE, THERE IS NO SPECIAL MAGIC IN THE NUMBER 55 IN THE FACE OF THE CONSTANTLY CHANGING TACTICS OF THE TRAFFICKERS. FOR INSTANCE, THE SHAN UNITED ARMY AND OTHER BURMESE DISSIDENT GROUPS FREQUENTLY ORGANIZE CARAVANS WITH ESCORTS OVER 200 WELL ARMED MEN. IF THE BPP WERE GIVEN ALL AVAILABLE POLICE HELICOPTERS, THEY WOULD NOT BE SUFFICIENT TO TRANSPORT ENOUGH MEN TO MATCH THAT FORCE.

7. REF PARA 2C. WE CONCUR AND NOTE THAT TPAD SUPPORT TO THE UNFDAC IS ALREADY SECONDARY TO NARCOTICS ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS.

8. REF PARA 2D. THIS APPEARS TO US TO BE UNNECESSARY SINCE DEA ALREADY HAS A QUALIFIED AVIATION OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE ADVISOR WHO IS AVAILABLE TO WORK WITH THE TPAD IN CHANG MAI. CCINC FUNDS WOULD BE BETTER USED TO COVER THE TRAVEL AND TDY EXPENSES OF THE DEA ADVISOR.

9. REF PARA 2E. THIS ALREADY WRITTEN INTO THE EXISTING PROAG.

10. REF PARA 3. POLITICAL RAMIFICATION OF NON-DELIVERY OF ALL THE HELICOPTERS ARE ALREADY BEEN EXPLAINED IN REFTELS A, B AND C. THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT WITHHOLDING DELIVERY ON TWO OF THE

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HELICOPTERS MAY HAVE SERIOUS ADVERSE EFFECTS ON THE ENTIRE NARCOTICS PROGRAM HERE. IF ONLY THREE HELICOPTERS ARE TO BE DELIVERED, ALTERNATIVE B IS THE LEAST OBJECTIONABLE SOLUTION. ALTERNATIVE A WOULD MERELY RESULT IN FRAGMENTATION OF THE NARCOTICS PROGRAM AND WASTE CCINC FUNDS IN ESTABLISHING MAINTENANCE FACILITIES FOR THE DEPT. OF CUSTOMS (DOC). MOREOVER, SPLITTING UP THE HELICOPTERS BETWEEN THE TPAD AND THE DOC IS LIKELY TO DAMAGE PROSPECTS FOR WHOLEHEARTED COOPERATION BETWEEN POLICE AND CUSTOMS. IN ANY EVENT, WE ARE NOT SURE HOW USEFUL THESE PARTICULAR HELICOPTERS WOULD BE TO THE DOC. EMBASSY FEELS THAT ALTERNATIVE C IS UNACCEPTABLE AND COULD SERIOUSLY DAMAGE OUR WHOLE NARCOTICS

EFFORT, FOR REASONS STATED ABOVE IN REFTELS A,
B AND C.
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